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FAREWELL SERMON:

PREACHED AT THE

Parish Church, Dartmouth,

ON THE MORNING OF THE 1ST NOVEMBER, 1868.

BY

THE REV. F. W. PRYOR, M. A.



HALIFAX, N. S. :
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*Christ Church, Dartmouth,
2nd November, 1868.*

REV. W. F. PRYOR, —

Rev. and Dear Sir,—We, the subscribers, having listened to your farewell sermon yesterday morning, so full of earnest counsel, of affectionate solicitude for our eternal welfare, and of kindly expressions at parting, ask your permission to have it printed for private circulation.

We make this request, to enable those who were not present at the service, to read it, and that all may preserve it in remembrance of one whom we esteem so highly, and that we may derive instruction and comfort therefrom.

We are, &c.,

JAMES W. TURNER,
JAMES H. THORNE,
Church Wardens.

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HEBREWS xiii., 20, 21.

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead, our Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,—make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

LIFE, dear brethren, is a solemn thing. It is short and uncertain ; nay, more—its course is ever onwards with strange sad speed, as if eager to reach its close. Yet it is a precious gift of God, and its value rises all the higher the more it is looked upon as a time of grace. We live for another world, and our present existence stands in close connection with that future eternity. And still, notwithstanding this, oh ! how often are these great truths slighted and forgotten. When looking round us, we fail to perceive or acknowledge them ; and the lesson of time's swiftness is lost upon us. We live on and on, as if things were certain to continue for ever just as they are now. But sometimes there comes a *break*, a reminder that change must come, and that there is such a thing as the end of time for each and every one of us. And it appears to me, brethren, that God in His love and wisdom is now thus reminding us. For more than three happy years now past, we have dwelt together as pastor and people in this parish. With the exception of last winter, when for a season we were called upon to part, there has been an uninterrupted term of happy intercourse and communion. And many, perhaps, thought naturally that it might continue thus. But God in His inscrutable wisdom has seen fit to have it otherwise : at once there comes a check, and we are stopped in our onward course. Ah ! should this not remind us, (I say), that *all* earthly connections must one day have an end,—that but a few more years, and then on earth there will be time

no longer. Yes, it should impress us certainly with the fact, that "here we have no continuing city,—that we are strangers and pilgrims upon earth,"—that, however permanent and stationary life may sometimes appear to us, the journey's end will sooner or later be surely reached, and time be exchanged for eternity. But, beloved, in addition to these passing thoughts thus necessarily suggested by this solemn event,—this closing of our pastoral connection,—I feel that I must seek more particularly to improve the occasion of my parting address by dwelling briefly upon a portion of God's word. It is the last time that I shall speak to you from this pulpit, at any rate for many years, while, with numbers now before me, I shall certainly be pleading for the last time in life. The next time we meet, will be in eternity. And oh! may God grant it to be a meeting in a happy eternity,—an entrance together into the joy of our Lord. For, as I have so often told you, it is simply with this one aim and object that I have ever endeavoured humbly to labour among you as an ambassador of Christ. While it is to this—I mean this joyous meeting in a heavenly home—that I yet look forward in faith and hope. And, therefore, in the Apostle's words, which I have chosen as our text this morning, my parting prayer for you all is this,—that "the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, may make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

Before dwelling upon the prayer itself, then, let us first glance briefly at the expressions introducing it. They present us with the glad tidings of a free and full salvation, the gospel of the grace of God, the story of a dying, risen, and ascended Saviour. And first, we have the aspect in which God the Father is represented here;—"the God of peace." It recalls to us His own words recorded by the prophet,—"Fury is not in me, saith the Lord." He has turned from the fierceness of His anger, and made peace between Himself and man by the blood of the cross. Not, you observe,—not "peace at any price," at the expense of His honour, of His holiness, His justice, law, or truth. God has not overlooked the guilt of sin; though He pardons, He does not palliate it. And peace it is therefore, only at such a price as satisfied the utmost

demands of His law, and fully vindicated His holiness in the sight of the universe. For at the cross of Christ, where this peace was made, there mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace embrace each other. It is only when believing in Jesus, that we are at peace with God—at peace with His justice ; at peace with His law ; at peace with our own conscience. We have nothing to fear in the hour of death ; nothing to dread at the day of judgment. Christ has paid our debt, and satisfied for our sins ; and, fully reconciled to us by the blood of His Son, a just and holy God has no longer any quarrel with us. “ Justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

But further, says the Apostle,—“ The God of peace who *brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus.*” Here we have the Saviour’s resurrection alluded to. And though in one sense the glory of that rising belongs to Christ Himself,—for said He of His own body, “ Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up ;” “ I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again,”—yet here it is attributed to God the Father. Just as to the same event, the day of His resurrection, St. Paul applies the Psalmist’s prophetic words, “ Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee,”—“ as if (says a commentator on these words,) as if He came from Joseph’s tomb, more evidently and gloriously God’s begotten Son, than from the virgin’s womb. From that womb He came, a feeble infant, to save the world ; but from this tomb He comes, a mighty conqueror, having saved it. There, with angel spectators of the fight, He entered the field a combatant ; but here, with angels attending His triumph, wearing the crown of resurrection, and declared to be the Son of God with power, He ascends to His Father—the gates of heaven thrown open to the cry, ‘ Lift up your heads, ye gates ; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, that the King of glory may come in.’ ” Yes, and thus His resurrection is the work of God ; as well as the crown of His own labours ; the token of His acceptance ; the fruit of His death. And then again ; the God of peace raises Him from the dead, not simply by His almighty power, but “ *through the blood of the everlasting covenant ;*” His own blood—as if the blood that washes away our sins, sprinkled on His dead face, restored Him to life ; and sprinkled on the doors of the grave, forthwith threw them open. Oh ! brethren, think of the power and efficacy of that precious

blood ; nay, I beseech you, pray in strong faith and heartfelt earnestness that it may be sprinkled in rich abundance on your own souls. For if that blood, in a sense, gave life to a dead Christ, surely it must impart new life to us. Yes ; through its power, dead with Him to sin, crucified with Him to the flesh, and buried with Him in the baptism of the Holy Spirit, we may—we must rise to newness of life. But again.—There is yet another expression here, that we have not considered. We have the Lord Jesus represented as “ *the Great Shepherd of the sheep.*” He calls Himself “ *the Good Shepherd.*” But both properties, infinite in measure, meet in Jesus. While St. Paul calls Him the “ *Great,*” He says, “ *I am the Good Shepherd.*” And oh ! how worthy of either title ! How tender He is to weak and feeble infants. How He gathers them in His arms, and carries them in His bosom ; and, placing Himself at their head, leads them forth to green pastures and by still waters. Nay, making such full provision for His people that they can sing, “ *The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.*” He sets such high value on His flock, that if even one should stray and be “ *ready to perish,*” He seeks the wanderer till it is found. And then, the Good Shepherd and the Great Shepherd, as He is in these aspects of His character, Jesus is especially and emphatically so in this, that He laid down His life for the sheep. He made His soul an offering for sin, suffering and dying for us, “ *the just for the unjust.*” “ *He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities ; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.*”

And now then, the prayer itself. “ *The God of peace, that brought t again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will ; working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen.*” *Make you perfect !* And oh ! dear brethren, in the solemn act of parting, what better wish could I express for you, or how pray that you might aim at a better object. It is a high, but, thank God, not a hopeless aim. And therefore I repeat it,—“ *May the God of peace make you perfect in every good work to do His will ; working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ.*” It has been my prayer ever since I came to minister among you ; nay, more—the one pervading idea to

stimulate my whole work and labour of love,—this your salvation and perfection. And now again, I beseech you, brethren, as I use this parting prayer in your behalf,—I exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as you have received of me how you ought to walk to please God, so you *would abound more and more*. Let not your souls be cast down by past failures, or because you are so far from perfect yet. But rise to new attempts, saying with David, “Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance and my God.” Yes; hope in God. Who loses hope, loses the battle. Let perfection always be your aim—nothing below it. Seeking strength from above, rise from your knees to try it again and again; and you will find that every true, earnest, prayerful effort raises you higher and still higher on the Rock of Ages. Let every day see some work done; some battle fought; some victory won. Rise every morning to make a new start for heaven; and let every sun that sets leave you a day’s journey nearer it. It is “the God of peace” Himself who is to “work in you that which is well pleasing in His sight.” Resting, therefore, on this precious promise, take more pains with yourselves than you have done before. Pray and strive that you may become more strong in faith, more holy in life, more mindful of the many blessings, temporal and spiritual, which surround your path. We can no more grow, or abound, or be perfect in these graces, by merely wishing for them, than a child can increase in stature and strength by desiring it, while, at the same time, he neglects all the means of growth. Therefore, do not abuse the doctrine of the Holy Spirit’s influence, to live in indolence. The promised aid of that Spirit is to stimulate and not to paralyze our energies. It is because God *works in us, that we are encouraged to work*.

But, beloved, I should be unfaithful to your interests, and certainly unkind, were I not here, in addition to these remarks, to uplift a *warning voice*. It is vain to attempt to rear a superstructure of practical godliness, without first laying the foundation of “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” No observance of the means of grace, no prayers, no self-denial, no compliance with divine ordinances, will please God, or make us in reality acceptable to Him, until we have by faith in the great atonement, “passed from death unto life.” It is un-

scriptural ; nay, more, it is unreasonable that it should be so. And hence the warning that I now in this solemn hour reiterate to you, that God will not, cannot look upon a sinner acceptably, before that sinner has gone to Jesus, or has believed on Him as the Saviour of his soul. Faith in Jesus, a saving faith, is the mainspring, the root, the germ of all true religion.

But I feel that I need not stay, dear brethren, to recapitulate in so many words what has simply been the sum and substance of my teaching during my ministry in this place. You know, beloved, that “when I came to you, it was not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God ; for I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” And you have consequently had pointed out to you,—though (true) in a very feeble manner, yet faithfully, I trust, and plainly,—the great fundamental doctrines of *Man’s ruin by the fall, his condemnation under the law, and his moral inability to deliver himself by any power or strength of his own ;—The divinity and incarnation of the Son of God ;—Free and full justification, through faith in the atoning blood and righteousness of the Redeemer ;—The nature of justifying faith, its fruits and evidences ;—The agency of the Holy Spirit in the conversion and sanctification of believers ;—and The necessity of a renewed heart, and of holiness in the life, not as the title to heaven, but as a meetness for its enjoyment.* Moreover, in doing so, I have aimed faithfully, too, “to declare to you the whole counsel of God,” endeavouring to “keep back nothing that was profitable for you.” I have laboured to build you up in what I believe, nay, in what the greatest and the best of men have ever believed, to be the true principles of our Reformed and Protestant Church, avoiding all novelties both in doctrine and practice, and to give you solid reasons for maintaining this “faith once delivered unto the Saints.” Fidelity demanded that I should give you plain, honest interpretations of the Bible in the true spirit of our Articles and Prayer-Book : and I have endeavoured, therefore, as best I could, to carry out the intentions of the Church, which, in the cycle of her offices and ministrations, and in every service of her Christian year, is testifying that “Holy Scripture doth set out to us only the name of Jesus Christ, whereby we must be saved.”

And now, beloved, my work in this place and among you is brought

to its close, and I must say farewell. It has been my happy lot to sojourn here for the past three years, ministering to a people full of consideration and affectionate attachment. And as I leave you now in a spirit of thankfulness for your many kindnesses, and in a spirit of love toward you all, I cannot but repeat, dear brethren, my ardent longing and earnest prayer for your salvation. Many, alas ! very many in this parish are yet walking in the path of the destroyer, "having no real hope, and without God in the world." Warned as they have been, nay, earnestly entreated, to "flee from the wrath to come," they yet continue preremptorily to reject the Saviour, reject that Jesus in whom alone is life, reject and scorn the only escape, the only hope to which a poor sinner can with safety cling. Brethren, am I not speaking the truth ?—nay, will not your own consciences condemn you ? Oh ! come to Jesus, then, is again my message, the message of my last farewell ; come to Him at once—you who have never yet had your sins washed out, who are not converted—come ere it be *too late, too late for ever !* For, "behold the Judge standeth at the door." Depend upon it, the days we live in are eventful days. The times are perilous. The signs, thickening and darkening around us, are deeply and fearfully significant. We are standing on the eve of events perhaps more awful than the world has ever seen ; a period of woe to the world more dark than has ever yet cast its shadows upon it, seems rapidly approaching. And oh ! if this be true,—then what must be the lot of those who are not in Christ ! who have never looked to Jesus to be saved ! Language fails to picture the awful sequence ! Enough for us to know that "they shall be punished," (as the apostle says) "with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power !" —there is "reserved for them the blackness of darkness for ever !" And as a watchman, therefore, on the walls of our Zion, I would once more blow in your ears the warning trumpet with no uncertain sound. Oh ! unbelievers, hear it, I beseech you, and take warning that you may deliver your souls. You cannot trifle for ever. You may put off religion *now*, and refuse the counsel of God's ministers. But the day is drawing on when God will come down to speak to you. And what will your end be ? Brethren, by the mercies of God, I entreat you to look this question in the face. Oh ! stife not conscience by vague hopes of God's mercy, while your heart cleaves to the world. Do not drown

convictions by childish fancies about God's love, while your daily ways and habits show plainly that the love of the Father is not in you. There is mercy in God like a river, but it is for the penitent believer in Christ Jesus. And there is love in God towards sinners which is unspeakable and unsearchable, but it is for those who hear Christ's voice and follow Him. Oh! seek, then, to have an interest in that love. Cast yourselves wholly and unreservedly on the Lord Jesus for time and eternity. And "turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" God is not willing that you should perish. "As I live," He says, "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth." Jesus loves you and grieves to see your folly. And surely, therefore, if lost, your blood will be upon your own heads.

But you, beloved, who are looking to Jesus as your all, who have "tasted that the Lord is gracious," having fled to Him for pardon and for life,—though small may be your number, I must yet say a few words to *you*. Believers in Jesus, oh! bear in mind, then, that "the time is short." And let the great change that you feel has been wrought in you by God the Spirit, become every year more evident. Let your light be an increasing light, ever shining more and more to the very end of your days. For, as I have so often reminded you, there is no such thing as a standing-still religion. A Christian was never meant to be like an animal, to grow to a certain age, and then stop growing; but rather like a tree,—he was intended to increase more and more in strength and vigour all his days. "Add," says the apostle, "to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance brotherly-kindness, and to brotherly-kindness charity. This is the way to be a useful Christian. The unconverted will believe you are in earnest when they see constant improvement, and perhaps be drawn to go with you in following Jesus. Yes! and therefore I say, the spiritual life there is in Christians ought to be more evident. Our lamps want trimming; they ought not to burn so dim. Our separation from the world should be more distinct,—our walk with God more *decided*. If we live in the Spirit, oh! let us also walk in the spirit. "Let us not sleep as do so many others, but let us watch and be sober." "And that, *knowing the time*, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." Let us watch more diligently, let us pray

more fervently, that we may "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." Let us blend the steady thought of our Redeemer's coming with every present duty, with every privilege, every effort ; for, sure I am it will hallow, cheer, and dignify us, consecrating by one of the most solemn motives, the lowliest work of faith and the feeblest labour of love ; nay, enabling us to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love." While, as a means, a practical means of remembering this, I would now invite you to that sacred feast, where "as often as we eat the bread and drink the cup, we do shew the Lord's death *till He come.*" Yes ! and fellow-followers of Jesus, it will be the last time that we can draw near as pastor and people to that table of the Lord. Oh ! let me affectionately invite you, therefore, to join me in now "taking this holy sacrament to your comfort," and to come with the cheering happy thought, that if we thus "spiritually eat the flesh of Christ and drink his blood, then we dwell in Christ and Christ in us ; we are one with Christ and Christ with us." Soon the earthly pilgrimage will be ended ; all means of grace and ordinances to keep alive the flame that would otherwise languish and decay, no longer be required. Yes, soon shall the little hour of life's unquiet dream be over ; the course be finished ; the victory won. And then, seated at the supper-table of the Lamb in glory, we shall recount with bounding hearts the many mercies of the way ; farewells and partings will be forever done, and all the bitter experiences of this vale of tears forever obliterated and forgotten. Yes, then, basking in the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, we shall be "forever with the Lord," nay, more, we shall be with one another too, all singing together the glorious anthem of eternal praise to "Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father." So that to that joyous scene, beloved, I now—in the act of bidding you finally farewell, refer your faith and hope, your contemplation and your prayers ; and in prospect of it myself, I pour forth again, as having been the object of all my anxiety and my pastoral work for you, the prayer which I breathe from the bottom of my soul, and which I shall never cease to breathe so long as life remains,—“ May the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of

the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ ; to whom be glory for ever and ever ! Amen."

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TO THE REV. W. FERDINAND PRYOR,—

Rector of Christ Church—Dartmouth.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,—We cannot permit you to leave us, it may be forever, without expressing our sincere sorrow at your departure and its cause.

The letter of resignation sent by you to the Church Corporation, and their acceptance of it, with a Resolution passed unanimously that you have permission to leave at the time named by you, created no light feeling of regret. But when preparations for your departure and the reasons therefor are daily before us, then it is we begin seriously to realize and reflect upon our position, and the loss we are about to sustain.

The relations, that usually exist between the Pastor and his people, are of the most kindly and interesting character, a proper and wise result arising from such a connexion. With you and us this has been especially so. You were selected as our Rector although personally unknown to many of us. You accepted the invitation, which you had never sought, and quite a young man in the ministry, you have by the earnestness and zeal with which you have discharged your duties, merited the respect of all men, and the love and veneration of your Parishioners. It were needless to say how much we deplore your compulsory absence from us—but health is the first earthly consideration of us all—and more especially should it be so with you, who are ever earnestly engaged in your Heavenly Master's cause,—the salvation of the souls of those around you committed to your care.

That your Parishioners would make any sacrifice to retain your services among them, provided your health could be secured, is known to you.

We can only therefore say in conclusion that, we earnestly pray, that you and your amiable Lady, may reach your new field of labour in health, and that our loss may be your gain in all spiritual gifts and worldly prosperity.

Believe us, Reverend and Dear Sir,

To be your sincerely attached Parishioners.

JAMES W. TURNER, } *Church Wardens.*
JAMES H. THORNE, }

G. A. CREIGHTON, }

F. W. PASSOW, }

W. S. SYMONDS, }

HENRY WATT, }

HENRY GLENDENING, }

JOHN P. MOTT, }

JAMES R. DEWOLF, M.D., }

T. SHORT, }

EDWARD BILLING, }

JOHN WALLACE } *Vestry.*

*Francis Young -
George Connors -*

On behalf of the Parishioners of Christ's Church—Dartmouth.

D. McLEAN, *Vestry Clerk.*

To the Parishioners of Christ Church, Dartmouth, N. S.

MY DEAR PARISHIONERS,—It is with feelings, I can assure you, of the deepest sorrow, that I am now bidding you farewell. Indeed it would be vain to attempt describing my regret in any possible language I might use. It is a pain of no ordinary depth. For, attached as I have been to you myself, that attachment has been, if possible, much increased by your affectionate reciprocation of it to me and mine.

Your many kindnesses, and the various manifestations of your implicit confidence in my ministrations, have ever been drawing me closer to you in the bonds of pastoral affection and of solicitude for your spiritual and eternal good. So that in leaving you now after a happy pastorate of three years and more, it is with a heart full of no little heaviness and sore regret. But you all know the cause of my departure ; and how impossible it is to resist God's work and will—" He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth." Hence there can be no thwarting or crossing His designs and dealings. There is a " needs be " in them all ; and our comfort should be,—if indeed we are His children by faith in Christ,—that they come from the hand of a Father who ordereth all things wisely and " doeth all things well "—This comforts me in parting from you ; while feeling too, that my successor who has been chosen to fill my place, has been brought here by this same over-ruling God—I can leave now with a comparatively easy mind, assured as I am from a personal knowledge of his worth, and a thorough confidence in his faithfulness to the truth, that he will ever feed you with " the bread of life."

Of my own humble work in this portion of our Master's vineyard, I shall not speak ; nor of the manner in which that Master called me to labour in your midst. Suffice it to say that you, on your part, have ever encouraged me by your kind forbearance and devotion, your hospitality and very constant affection. And my parting prayer now is, that the great vital truths I have endeavoured to instil into your hearts and minds, may be blessed to the salvation of your souls ; nay, that the great Head of the Church may ever watch over you, as a people, supplying you with the faithful ministrations of His everlasting Gospel. Once more thanking you, then, for your very kind expressions of affection both to myself and Mrs. Pryor.

Believe me, my dear Parishioners,

Your faithful friend and Pastor,

W. FERDINAND PRYOR.

Dartmouth, Nov. 2, 1868.